



Primer on No Child Left Behind Frequently Asked Questions

What is a target school?

A target school is a school that missed a federal benchmark in at least one area for the first year. There are no sanctions for target schools. The Department of Education offers technical assistance to help keep target schools from becoming high priority schools.

What is a high priority school?

A high priority school is a school that has missed the same benchmark for more than one year. There are different levels of high priority schools: School Improvement, On Notice, Probation, Corrective Action, and Alternative Governance.

What is adequate yearly progress (AYP)?

AYP is a measure of year-over-year student achievement. The goal of No Child Left Behind is for 100% of students to be proficient in reading, language arts and math by 2014. Standards for AYP are set to ensure that schools reach that goal. This year, a baseline is being established against which to measure progress in the future.

How is student achievement assessed?

In Tennessee, K-8 students take TCAP achievement tests in math, reading and language arts. In grades 5, 8, and 11, they also take a writing assessment test. High school students take Gateway exams in math and English. Because we are in the initial stages of implementing No Child Left Behind, only grades 3, 5, and 8 were used to determine proficiency for this school year. Performance on these assessments is measured against standards set by the federal government to determine if a school is proficient.

My child's school is excellent. Why is it on the list of target schools?

No Child Left Behind has very stringent requirements. If a school fails to meet every requirement in every subgroup – including demonstrating 95% participation on assessments – it fails to meet the federal benchmark and is identified as a target school. That does not mean the school is not excellent. If, for example, the test was given on a day when many students were out with the flu, it is possible that fewer than 95% of students took the test, causing the school to miss the benchmark.

How can I find out why my child's school is a target or high priority school?

The State Department of Education Web site includes information on target and high priority schools. For detailed information and At-A-Glance summaries identifying areas in which schools did and did not make federal benchmarks, please visit <http://www.state.tn.us/education/>.

If this is the first year for implementing NCLB requirements, why was my child's school on a high priority list last year?

Tennessee was actually a pioneer in mandating school accountability and has had a system to identify high priority schools since the 2000-2001 school year. The issue now is that the state program must adapt to the new federally mandated No Child Left Behind criteria. This year, the state and federal systems are being merged.

What does my child's school have to do to come off the list?

If a school meets federal benchmarks for two consecutive years in the areas for which it was deficient, it will be considered to be in good standing.

What is the State Department of Education doing to improve my child's school?

Each year a school does not meet required benchmarks, additional resources are dedicated to helping improve performance. Assistance includes a range of initiatives, such as deploying Exemplary Educators (master teachers recently retired) to develop corrective action plans, providing training for teachers and administrators, and placing additional reading specialists in schools.

What is an Exemplary Educator?

Exemplary Educators (EE's) are the backbone of Tennessee's efforts to improve teaching and learning. EE's are veteran teachers selected and trained by the State Department of Education and assigned to work with high priority schools for the purpose of improving student achievement.

How can I learn about school choice and supplemental services?

School districts with Title I schools identified as high priority are required to offer school choice and supplemental services. Contact your school district office for more information. Phone numbers for district offices are available on the State Department of Education Web site at . You can also find information about supplemental services on the Web site at <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/sde/>. You can also find information about supplemental services on the Web site at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/accts supplemental.htm>.

What can I do, as a parent, to help my school improve?

All schools must develop school improvement plans, and schools identified as high priority must revise those plans, with input from parents. You can contact your school to become a member of the school improvement planning team.